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SUBJECT: MINISTER OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS ASKS FOR MORE SUPPORT  
TO WOMEN IN THE PROVINCES

¶1. During a June 10 courtesy call on Minister of Women's Affairs Dr. Husn Bano Ghazanfar, the Ambassador reaffirmed the strong U.S. commitment to Afghan women. Both President Obama and Secretary Clinton believe supporting Afghan women is essential to steering Afghanistan toward peace and economic development and away from terrorism, the Ambassador emphasized. Ching Eikenberry accompanied and expressed her interest in collaborating with the Ministry to advance women's health, education, and political rights.

¶2. Ghazanfar thanked the U.S. for supporting Afghan women. She highlighted the 20 U.S.-built provincial Department of Women's Affairs (DOWAs) as a particularly important contribution. She urged the U.S. to build facilities for the 14 remaining provinces. DOWAs are not just offices, but are important spaces for women to meet, talk, learn, and commiserate together. She also asked for increased assistance for the two million Afghan widows. Finally, she asked for help implementing projects under the 10-year National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA). These projects are particularly important in the provinces, where women face many more difficulties than in Kabul.

¶3. Ghazanfar also said President Obama's speech in Cairo gave her great hope. She noted Obama mentioned Afghanistan not once but several times and warmly welcomed his attention.  
EIKENBERRY